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FEED COSTS OF PRODUCING YOUNG RABBITS TO WEANING AGE

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War conditions have made it practically impossible for rabbit raisers to obtain protein supplements. In many cases an adequate supply of cereal grains is not available. Because of these circumstances information obtained as the result of studies conducted at the United States Rabbit Experiment Station some years ago is pertinent to the present emergency. The experiments covered a period of 2 years and the rabbits used were New Zealands, both red and white, of good average breeding, not selected for exceptional producing ability. They were fed first-class alfalfa hay and a concentrated mixture of 2 parts rolled oats, 1 part bran, and 1 part rolled barley, with a small amount of minerals. Some groups were supplied, in addition, either cod-liver oil or yeast. The rabbits were given all the hay they could consume readily, a quantity that constituted from 63 to 71 percent of the total ration. More recent studies indicate that this high consumption of hay is due to the rabbit's need of more protein than is contained in these particular concentrates. A small quantity of green feed was supplied in season. Later tests at the station demonstrated that supplements of cod-liver oil or yeast do not improve a basic ration composed of good quality cereal grains and alfalfa hay.

The equivalent of 90.6 does produced in one year 1,540 rabbits that at the time of weaning, or when they were approximately 60 days of age, weighed 5,367 pounds. Partly grown litters at the beginning of the experiments and those not yet 60 days of age at the end brought the total to 5,730 pounds, or an average production for the year for each doe of young that totaled 63.2 pounds. The does were bred to produce 4 litters a year, but, of course, this number was not obtained in every case. It was found that for each pound, live weight, of young it required 5.3 pounds of feed, including both that fed the does for the entire year and that given all of the young until they averaged 60 days old.

NOTE: This leaflet supersedes Biological Survey leaflet Bi-1294 and Wildlife Research and Management Leaflet BS-21, issued in August 1933 and October 1935 respectively, by the Bureau of Biological Survey under the Department of Agriculture.

The accompanying table, based on these findings, shows feed costs under varying price conditions. Following from Column 1 the line containing the price per ton the rabbit raiser paid for hay, he will find his feed cost per pound of live young rabbit in the column headed by the price, per cwt., of his concentrates.

If the average number of pounds of young at weaning age produced by each doe in a year is increased, however, the feed requirement per pound of young is lessened. Select does should produce 100 pounds or more of 60 day old young a year when self-feeding is practiced and when unlimited protein supplement is available as under normal conditions. Consequently, the unit cost will be decreased, although not in direct proportion to the increased pounds of live weight, as, of course, the does themselves and the extra young rabbits eat added feed. More rapid gains of the individual rabbits also require additional feed, but not in proportion to the increased rapidity of gain. The rabbit raiser should, therefore, endeavor in every way possible to increase the average number of pounds of weaned young produced in a year by each doe.

He should keep in mind also that the costs shown in the accompanying table are feed costs only, and should not make the mistake of figuring profits solely from this table. Other important items of expense include labor, interest, equipment, and depreciation, which probably vary with each establishment.

Costs of 5.3 pounds of feed, consisting of first-class alfalfa hay (63 to 71 percent) and concentrates required to produce and raise to 60 days of age 1 pound, live weight, of rabbit

Price of alfalfa hay, per ton	Feed cost when concentrates, per cwt., cost—															
	$1.60	$1.70	$1.80	$1.90	$2.00	$2.10	$2.20	$2.30	$2.40	$2.50	$2.60	$2.70	$2.80	$2.90	$3.00	$3.10
	Cents	Cents	Cents	Cents	Cents	Cents	Cents	Cents	Cents	Cents	Cents	Cents	Cents	Cents	Cents	Cents
$10.00---	4.54	4.71	4.89	5.06	5.23	5.40	5.57	5.75	5.92	6.09	6.26	6.43	6.61	6.78	6.95	7.12
$12.50---	4.99	5.16	5.34	5.51	5.68	5.85	6.02	6.20	6.37	6.54	6.71	6.88	7.06	7.23	7.40	7.57
$15.00---	5.44	5.61	5.79	5.96	6.13	6.30	6.47	6.66	6.82	6.99	7.16	7.33	7.51	7.68	7.85	8.02
$17.50---	5.89	6.06	6.24	6.41	6.58	6.75	6.92	7.10	7.27	7.44	7.61	7.78	7.96	8.13	8.30	8.47
$20.00---	6.33	6.50	6.68	6.85	7.02	7.19	7.36	7.54	7.71	7.88	8.05	8.22	8.40	8.57	8.74	8.91
$22.50---	6.78	6.95	7.13	7.30	7.47	7.64	7.81	7.99	8.16	8.33	8.50	8.67	8.85	9.02	9.19	9.36
$25.00---	7.23	7.40	7.58	7.75	7.92	8.09	8.26	8.44	8.61	8.78	8.95	9.12	9.30	9.47	9.64	9.81
$27.50---	7.68	7.85	8.03	8.20	8.37	8.54	8.71	8.89	9.06	9.23	9.40	9.57	9.75	9.92	10.09	10.26
$30.00---	8.12	8.29	8.47	8.64	8.81	8.98	9.15	9.33	9.50	9.67	9.84	10.01	10.19	10.36	10.53	10.70
$32.50---	8.57	8.74	8.92	9.09	9.26	9.43	9.60	9.78	9.95	10.12	10.29	10.46	10.64	10.81	10.98	11.15
$35.00---	9.02	9.19	9.37	9.54	9.71	9.88	10.05	10.23	10.40	10.57	10.74	10.91	11.09	11.26	11.43	11.60
$37.50---	9.47	9.64	9.82	9.99	10.16	10.33	10.50	10.68	10.85	11.02	11.19	11.36	11.54	11.71	11.88	12.05
$40.00---	9.91	10.08	10.26	10.43	10.60	10.77	10.94	11.12	11.29	11.46	11.63	11.80	11.98	12.15	12.32	12.49
$42.50---	10.36	10.53	10.71	10.88	11.05	11.22	11.39	11.57	11.74	11.91	12.08	12.25	12.43	12.60	12.77	12.94
$45.00---	10.81	10.98	11.16	11.33	11.50	11.67	11.84	12.02	12.19	12.36	12.53	12.70	12.88	13.05	13.22	13.39